

writing to endorse, the “Seniors Have Eyes, Ears and Teeth Act.” It is our hope that action will be taken on your legislation during the current 115th Congress.

The “Seniors Have Eyes, Ears and Teeth Act” would help millions of Medicare beneficiaries who need vision, hearing and dental care, which is not covered by Medicare. Paying for these services is a hardship for many Medicare beneficiaries, half of whom live on incomes below \$24,150 per year. Medicare households spend on average 15 percent of their income, over two times more than younger households, on Medicare cost sharing and for services not covered by Medicare.

Routine dental services are very important to the overall health of Medicare beneficiaries, and today, many Medicare beneficiaries suffer isolation and severe health problems because they cannot afford to pay for vision and hearing examinations or to buy eyeglasses or hearing aids. For these reasons, the National Committee’s current Legislative Agenda includes support for expanding Medicare benefits to cover vision, hearing and dental health services and equipment, which are important for healthy aging.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you to secure enactment of the “Seniors Have Eyes, Ears and Teeth Act,” which would improve the Medicare program for today’s seniors as well as future generations of beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

MAX RICHTMAN,
President and CEO.

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, today I will reintroduce the WINGMAN Act, a vital veterans’ bill that will expedite the claims process for veterans who come to our congressional offices seeking assistance with their benefit claims. The current process leaves thousands of veterans and their families remaining in limbo awaiting resolution on their claims. The status quo is unacceptable, and it must change.

No servicemember should have to wait to receive benefits they have more than earned. This ends with the passage of the WINGMAN Act, which removes the middle man and allows staff to access these records directly, after obtaining a privacy release form without having to wait on the VA bureaucracy. I think if we just listen, this is about customer service. Yes, they are constituents, but they are also customers. Every Member of this Congress—all 535 Members—represents approximately 700,000 constituents, and I like to think that we are in the customer service business as is the VA, the Veterans Administration.

If we can’t service our customers, where else can they go?

Last Congress, WINGMAN passed this House unanimously. It passed the Veterans’ Affairs Committee unanimously, but it was held up by one Senator who thought he knew more than the 435 Members of this body and that he knew more than the Veterans’ Af-

fairs Committee. Fortunately, that Senator from Nevada is no longer here, and we are resubmitting this. I am hopeful that this Congress—the Members of this Chamber—will, once again, reform the veterans’ claims process and that our colleagues in the upper Chamber will as well.

Before I close, I would also like to take a moment to recognize Representatives RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, KYRSTEN SINEMA, and JOHN DELANEY for being co-leads on this bill. All three of my colleagues have demonstrated their commitment to fighting for our veterans every day of every year that they have served in Congress.

We have right now right over 150 co-sponsors of this bill, and it is a privilege to have their support. I thank them for helping to lead the charge to enact this change and others that are so desperately needed to better assist veterans and their families. Without their support, WINGMAN would not have the broad, bipartisan support that it does now. I urge the remainder of our colleagues to support WINGMAN as well. Let our Nation’s veterans know that we’ve got their six.

PROTECT THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. CORREA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to protect the Affordable Care Act. Today I urge you to give the Affordable Care Act the same chance we gave America’s other great healthcare program, Medicare, way back in 1965.

Today Medicare covers over 55 million Americans and is a staple for senior care. But let’s go back in time and remember what people were saying about Medicare in 1965. The American Medical Association said Medicare is an “invasion of the voluntary relationship between the patient and the physician.”

The then-Republican leadership said the bill will cost too much. It will never cover enough seniors. It will make taxes too high, and we will be broke within 2 years.

Those are some of the quotes from The New York Times in 1965.

Today, 52 years later, Medicare is one of the most efficient healthcare systems in our country. Why? Because we gave it a chance to flourish.

Mr. Speaker, when we come together on behalf of the American people, we get things done. I ask my colleagues today: Do not repeal the Affordable Care Act. Instead, let’s move past the politics of repealing the ACA. Let’s learn from five decades of Medicare. Let’s give Americans the healthcare coverage they want and they deserve, because in 60 years, it won’t really matter whose name is on the program. But what will matter is that we came together and stopped the repeal. What will matter is that we fixed the ACA and made it work for every American.

The American people deserve good health care. If folks have issues with the ACA, then let’s fix those issues. Let’s make the ACA better. But to rip coverage from 30 million people, to destroy 2.6 million jobs, and to add \$350 billion to our deficit is not a good thing.

I ask my colleagues today to keep the ACA.

CITIZEN LEGISLATORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for the very first time in this Chamber as a servant of Pennsylvania’s Eighth District—the good people of Bucks and Montgomery Counties—serving as their independent voice. The weight of this responsibility should not be lost on any of us. It is my sincere hope that each one of us here—regardless of where we come from or what our past experiences have been or how long we have been here—will do what the American people are demanding of us at this time: to work together as problem-solvers, not work against each other as ideologues.

Our Founders envisioned citizen legislators chosen from their peers to work on their behalf and to serve honorably with a focus on solutions, and then return home and live under the laws they helped pass, making way for a new generation of leadership with new ideas and a fresh perspective. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we as a nation have strayed from that vision.

Today too many Americans feel left out. They see a system that does more to preserve the status quo than it does to solve our most pressing challenges. They see a class of career politicians and elite insiders. I wish I could tell my constituents—my bosses—that this mess in Washington doesn’t affect them or their families or their businesses.

But as a former anticorruption FBI special agent, I have seen the brokenness in our system, and I know the real-life impact that it has, which is both soft and hard corruption that tilts the legislative agenda towards special interests, electoral complacency that allows lawmakers to focus on accumulating power rather than serving their constituents, and an entrenched partisanship that grinds the gears of government to a halt.

Mr. Speaker, this does not have to be the fate of this Congress. It does not. The 115th Congress can be remembered as the one that buried party labels for good and focused on fixing the system. To that end, I have introduced legislative proposals to begin that process: a constitutional amendment enacting term limits for all Members of Congress and a constitutional amendment preventing Members of Congress from being paid unless a budget is passed.

This is not just withholding payment for a period of time; this is a complete forfeiture.

I propose a balanced budget amendment so we are forced to stop kicking the can down the road and will create a fiscal path that will allow the next generation to thrive.

I also have a bill I call the Citizen Legislature Anti-Corruption Reform Act, or CLEAN Act, a bill that ends congressional pensions for life and requires this body to debate and act on single-issue legislation, codify that all laws passed by Congress apply to all of its Members, reform the broken gerrymandering process by moving all redistricting to independent, nonpartisan citizen commissions, and to expand access to political party primaries to include both independents and non-affiliated voters.

Is there anyone in this Chamber who does not believe that these measures will make our country a better place? Is there anyone in this Chamber who does not believe these measures will result in a healthier democracy and a system of government where our people have more faith and trust in? Is there anyone here who believes that more citizens serving in this body and more citizens participating in their government would not be a breath of fresh air for our Nation?

If you agree with our ideas, I urge you to join me and cosponsor these measures, join the Congressional Citizen Legislature Caucus, and advocate for these reforms. Share your vision with your constituents because they need to know that our Nation is not resigned to the status quo.

Mr. Speaker, Washington needs fewer politicians and more independent voices focused on serving the American people. That is the reason we are here. Let's not let them down. The time is now to answer their call to fix this system so we can start addressing the challenges that we face as a nation.

THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING IN THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is always an honor for me to stand here in the well of the House to know that I am one of less than 450 people in the world who have been accorded the preeminent privilege of standing in the well of the Congress of the United States of America.

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It is an honor to stand here at this podium with a rostrum behind me with the word “Justice” etched in it. Right behind me, “Justice” is etched into the rostrum. You can't see it at home because it is low, and it is beneath the view of the camera.

Today, I want to talk about justice, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about justice and the Justice Department. I do

this, Mr. Speaker, because we have a President-elect who has said he will be a law and order President. I want to make a distinction between law and order and justice, and I want to attribute this to the Justice Department versus a law and order department.

Mr. Speaker, you can have law and order in a dungeon, but you won't have justice. There is law and order in North Korea, but you don't have justice. Justice, Mr. Speaker, is what this Department is all about. It is not the law and order department. One of the best ways to explain it is to harken back to something that was called to our attention yesterday at the hearing for the nominee to become the head of the Justice Department.

When the Honorable JOHN LEWIS spoke, he went back to 1965, and the crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. On that day, George Wallace—one of the great segregationists of his time and, perhaps, the greatest segregationist of his time—had made it persistently clear to his troops that, if you maintain order, there will be law to protect you. As a result, those troops beat the marches all the way back to the church where they started. They were peaceful protesters. The Honorable JOHN LEWIS said he thought he might die. That is what law and order meant to a good many people in the South.

Law and order without justice is what took place on that day; but thank God there was a judge, the Honorable Frank M. Johnson. The Honorable Frank M. Johnson issued the order to allow those marches to move from Selma to Montgomery, and he did it notwithstanding his classmate George Wallace having said that they were banned from doing it. This was justice, not law and order alone. This is our fear—that the Justice Department will go back to the hands of someone who may consider it a law and order department and a department in which there is a belief that you can do anything to maintain the order and that there will be law to support your actions and activities.

Mr. Speaker, we must protect the notion of justice for all people in this country. This is why I was there yesterday to lend my support to Senator BOOKER when he spoke about justice and when he indicated that he could not support the nominee. I was honored to be there, seated right near the Honorable JOHN LEWIS when he said he could not support the nominee. I was also honored to be there with the head of the Congressional Black Caucus, CEDRIC RICHMOND, when he indicated: If this nominee is a civil rights advocate, why is the civil rights community so opposed to him? I think those were some very sage comments.

I must tell you that we in this country have come too far to allow the Justice Department to become the law and order department.

RUSSIA AND PRESIDENT PUTIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today as co-chair and founding member of the Polish, Hungarian, and Ukrainian House Caucuses.

I am also a strong defender of NATO and of its purpose in linking the free nations of Europe and the United States through this historic, hard-won alliance and security treaty among Europe's sovereign nations that respect the rule of law and our shared passion for liberty.

Our Nation and NATO's members paid the ultimate price in the last century for our priceless gift of liberty. We won the cold war, and our most treasured democratic values of life, liberty, freedom of assembly, press, and religion are under siege today by a predatory and repressive Russia. Go no further than any major business in your district and ask them how many times they are hacked daily by Russian predators—to get a sense of what is going on.

My purpose this morning is to remind our citizenry of the continuing and major, real threat to our NATO alliance and to the destabilization of Europe by Russia that necessitates our strengthening the alliance, not weakening it, to ward off Vladimir Putin's expansionist dreams.

I must say I am concerned by our President-elect's loose talk about Russia. His naive assumption that personal friendships with Russia's oligarchs—some of whom are active members of Russia's notorious mafia—can overcome strategic, expansionist imperatives that fill Vladimir Putin's mind are truly not in America's interest.

So let's review some recent history.

Domestically, Mr. Putin has suppressed the basic freedoms of the Russian people. His leadership has resulted in countless infringements of human rights violations and other actions that directly conflict with our foundational values in Western democracies.

Putin has an aggressive and very hostile foreign policy toward us—toward the United States—and our top allies. Russia has invaded neighboring sovereign countries, including the Republics of Georgia and Ukraine. Russia has threatened and harassed U.S. military personnel and diplomats overseas, not in the last century, now, orchestrating an anti-American propaganda campaign—the largest since World War II—both in our country and around the world; and it is conducting cyber warfare, as I speak, against our country, our government, our interests, as well as European governments; against political institutes; against our think tanks; against our State voter data systems, as our intelligence services have just informed us; and against our cities and counties, journalists, and individuals.